

The President's Daily Brief

1 February 1972

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Vietnamese Communists are still being defensive about the President's peace proposals. (Page 1)

Egypt [REDACTED]

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On Page 4 we report on Mujib's desire to make Bangladesh a little more independent of India.

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NORTH VIETNAM

The Vietnamese Communists are working hard to regain the propaganda initiative in the wake of the President's speech. On Monday the spokesman for Hanoi's delegation in Paris charged, among other things, that it was Washington rather than Hanoi that had ended the series of private talks. He also claimed that North Vietnam's position has been entirely consistent throughout the talks. To support this case, the delegation has published its nine-point proposal of last May, the text of what it claims is the US eight-point proposal of October, and the exchange of messages that preceded the break in the private contacts.

The delegation's communiqué claims that North Vietnam's private negotiating position "fully conforms" to the Viet Cong's seven points. The nine points do not in fact alter the essential substance of the Viet Cong package, but some of them differ in detail and emphasis. For instance, they give greater attention to Indochina as a whole and accord sketchier treatment to the problem of a political settlement. Moreover, Hanoi's whole series of disclosures leaves unclear the relationship between the two sets of demands.

Hanoi has also left obscure how the Viet Cong's Provisional Revolutionary Government now fits into the negotiations. For the first time since 1965, it has put itself rather than its southern front organization on record as sponsoring a specific negotiating package. Having done so, the North Vietnamese may need a special public relations effort to refurbish the Provisional Revolutionary Government's image as the "legitimate representative" of the South Vietnamese people.

The Communists' [redacted] statements suggest that they will seek to strike a note of righteous anger in their current propaganda. On substance, they are trying to keep from giving a completely negative impression with regard

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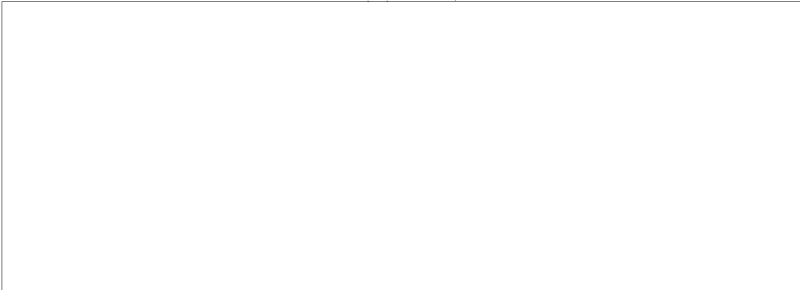
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to the US proposal, while at the same time avoiding any concrete commitments. Both the questions they posed at the last session of the Paris talks and their current rehashing of the history of the secret contacts serve these purposes. We do not anticipate any diplomatic initiatives from Hanoi until it can judge the results of the military and political campaigns that appear imminent in Indochina.

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EGYPT

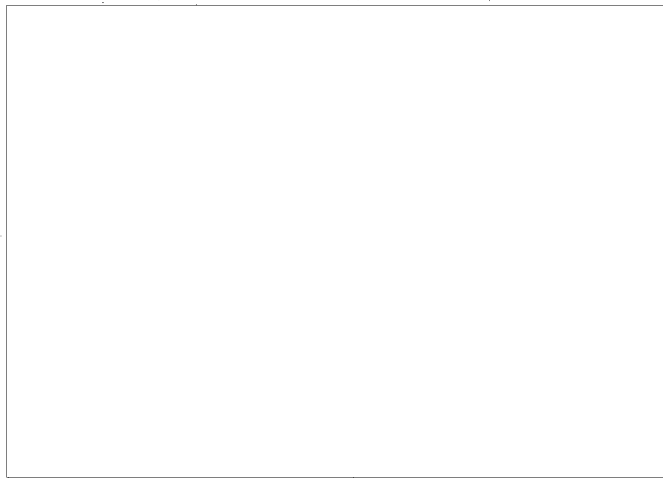


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BANGLADESH

Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman continues to seek a foreign policy independent of India. [REDACTED]

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Mujib's ability to move away from Indian domination, however, is greatly circumscribed by the security situation in Bangladesh. Over the weekend, the largest outbreak of fighting since independence occurred between Bengalis and Biharis. Although regular Bangladesh troops and police managed to restore order, tensions remain high. Over 50,000 irregulars are not wholly under government control, many are still armed, and Mujib still needs the Indian Army, which remains 45,000 strong in Bangladesh, as the ultimate guarantor of his authority. In the clashes this weekend, in fact, the Indians quickly became embroiled with some of the Mukti Bahini, but, anxious to maintain a low profile, pulled troops away from the Bihari enclaves.

Mujib also continues to be heavily dependent on the Indians for aid. New Delhi has agreed to provide about \$85 million in grants and loans, as well as several ships and planes. [REDACTED]

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NOTE

Laos: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] It is unlikely that this is a serious step toward negotiations. In the past, Souvanna has consistently refused to negotiate under military pressure, and we expect that he will reject this latest approach, just as last December he rejected a renewed Communist call for a bombing halt. On the military front, the situation is relatively quiet.

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